
From: Dambaugh, Eric <edambaugh@hgl.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2011 9:39 PM
To: Clower, Kimberly
Subject: FW: SSFL Interviews [REDACTED] and other
Attachments: 207.docx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Kim,

FYI. I do want to check in with you tomorrow about the [REDACTED] interview business. I'm confused about this (that's nothing new, right?).

Thanks.

ED

From: Cooper.Craig@epamail.epa.gov [mailto:Cooper.Craig@epamail.epa.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2011 6:52 PM
To: Dempsey.Gregg@epamail.epa.gov; Guvanasen, Victoria P.E.; Dambaugh, Eric
Cc: Vaughn, Steven; Rodriguez, Rene
Subject: Fw: SSFL Interviews [REDACTED] and other

Victoria: See attached transcript from [REDACTED] (Interviewee 207). I think there is some relevant information that can be integrated into the Subarea 6 TM.

Everyone: Andrew is working on getting the transcripts for [REDACTED] and the "3rd individual" with SRE work experience sent out to use as soon as possible. To keep things moving, I have asked Andrew to email those two transcripts directly to Victoria, Eric D, Gregg and myself.

Craig

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 Craig Cooper
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----- Forwarded by Craig Cooper/R9/USEPA/US on 06/01/2011 03:48 PM -----

From: Andrew Taylor/R9/USEPA/US
To: Craig Cooper/R9/USEPA/US@EPA
Date: 06/01/2011 02:42 PM
Subject: SSFL Interviews [REDACTED] and other

See email from Wendy (P2) below. [FX-6 Personal] Interview attached. Please forward attachment to relevant HGL folks.

The screening interview notes for [FX-6 Personal] (in the body of the email below), at face value, seem to indicate a need for follow-up. I'm sorry to say I don't recall why P2 and myself decided against it. It's possible that I tried to set up the face-to-face interview AFTER this screening call and could not due to his medical reasons (I thought it was the other way around)... for the purposes of the tech memo, if we don't figure it out in time, you could relay the information below and add that a follow-up interview is still planned.... not the best answer for you. Sorry. I'll try to figure this part out by tomorrow morning.

That's one out of three. Working on the other two.

-Andrew

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----- Forwarded by Andrew Taylor/R9/USEPA/US on 06/01/2011 02:34 PM -----

From: "Wendy Green Lowe"
To: Andrew Taylor/R9/USEPA/US@EPA
Date: 06/01/2011 02:23 PM
Subject: Interviews

Hi Andrew:

We screened but did not interview [FX-6 Personal]. The notes from the person who conducted the screening call are as follows: "Screened and willing to be interviewed. He quit to become a police officer (now retired) with Beverly Hills P.D.; he has become a community activist attending many of the community meetings DOE/Rocketdyne has had and has been vocal therein; he believes that there is relevant information that has been either covered up, suppressed or not divulged about materials/activities/contamination that has occurred at the SSFL; he has a lot of familiarity with various A4 components such as the burn pit, SRE, hot cells, sodium reactors, SNAP and the like, as well as former employees that were there; he thinks key documents that would reveal a lot of relevant activities are the logs that must be stored there; he believes of key interest would be what was referred to as Red Tag Permits wherein rad. & chemical surveys of various areas were done by himself and other physicists; there were also "Yellow, Blue and White Tag Permits"---each designating the nature of the permits. This guy just wants to keep talking and a simple screening wasn't possible without offending him. Care and concern should be given when interviewing him." The telephone number we have for him is: [FX-6 Personal] (cell)

We interviewed [FX-6 Personal]. He did approve his interview. I am attaching it to make life easier. Please treat it with the utmost confidentiality.

I checked the E-Room. It shows that Gregg Dempsey, Craig Cooper, Kim Clower, and you all continue to have access.

Good luck dealing with the emergency du jour!
Wendy



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In 1959 I was hired as a trainee operator and mechanic at the SRE, as referred by a family friend, who also was my supervisor. I worked there approximately one year, and it was during that time there that the fuel element failure occurred. I was on site a few hours after it occurred, and was involved in the clean up. When the SRE shut down, that reduced the need for personnel, so being low in seniority, I was laid off.

All my training was on the job. I don't recall any specific training courses or training meetings, but I was working towards becoming a certified operator on the reactor, which was not accomplished due to the layoff. I was quite fortunate in that the person who hired me took care to make certain I was involved in safe activities. I don't remember any safety meetings, but my coworkers were aware of safety issues and passed along those concerns to me.

I wore cotton coveralls and cotton gloves to work in, and on several occasions had to wear a respirator. I wore a film badge, but shortly into the clean up, Al took the film badges back. The levels of radiation were high enough that the badges would have shown high exposure, resulting in people having to cool off and not get any work done. The employees were willing to accept the risk in working in those risky conditions to maintain their job, and to hopefully get the SRE back running so that everyone could continue working. Safety was a concern, but it was overlooked in this instance. Some areas were so hot that it was off the Geiger counter, and those areas were roped off.

My cleanup activities went from approximately July to November, and I was involved with cleaning up various levels of contamination. I remember lying on the floor on plastic working on some of the reactor repairs. We used buffing machines on the floor as well as sponges and mops, also on the walls, but determined those efforts moved the contamination around more than clean it up, so we went to use Kotexes. Those were used to wipe and then discard. All items that were used in the clean up, as well as contaminated items, were stored outside in back of the SRE. It was there when I was laid off, so I am unaware of how it was eventually disposed. All the office equipment and supplies ended up there as well.

We used chemicals in the cleanup process, such as various cleaning agents purchased at the store, acetone, paint thinner, etc. We experimented with TCE to see if that would be effective in the radiation cleanup. There was a lot of TCE on site as it was used to flush out the rocket motors after Rocketdyne did testing.

Contamination within the building occurred as the result of operator error with a fuel transporter, also known as a coffin. It was a lead-lined device used to pull the fuel rods out and to transfer them. It had a lead shield that went over the reactor during the rod removal process. During these efforts, an operator failed to keep the shield in place, which resulted in irradiated reactor gas getting out and contaminating the building.

The reactor gas was stored in four tanks behind the SRE. It was kept in those tanks until the radiation degraded enough for it to be safely released to the environment, which took approximately two weeks. One of my assignments was to check the wind direction and weather conditions. If the wind was directed towards the ocean, or over the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles, then the gasses would be released from the appropriate tank. This occurred at night, to minimize the possibility of exposure to SSFL workers.

There was a building next to the SRE where the fuel rods were chopped up and cleaned, as they were transported there from the SRE. New cladding was put on the fuel rods there.

I had some reporting responsibilities, which included daily readings that I kept on a clipboard that was eventually used for reporting by others. Those readings include wind and weather, how hot the sodium was, temperatures of each fuel rods, etc.

I remember the Sodium Burn Pit, but I never worked there. I know that people I worked with took sodium from the SRE in 55-gallon drums over to the Pit and ignited it by firing a .22 rifle at it. I recall that there was a disposal area at the western edge of Area IV, but was not familiar with what was disposed there. I did nothing with the conservation yard.

I loved working there, it was a dream come true type of job. I was the youngest person at AI, and enjoyed working alongside people twice my age. I drove up Black Canyon every day and parked right at the SRE. I brought my lunch every day, as there was no cafeteria. I knew other areas of the SSFL could have their employees involved in leisure activities during lunch, such as cards or horseshoes, but we had to be vigilant with our responsibilities even during our breaks.

I am unaware of any of my former associates who may still be alive. I am glad you are recording what happened during this period of time at the SRE Reactor. Once I am gone there will be no one else that actually worked hands on in repairing the SRE Reactor in 1959.